



Inventors of World's first all South African language keyboard re-launch their complete A-Z (Afrikaans to Zulu) languages software in celebration of International Mother-Tongue Language Day

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

In celebration of International Mother-Tongue Language Day (**21st February 2007**) language innovators Translate.org.za, who won the 2006 ICT African Achievers Award for bridging the digital divide are re-launching updated versions of all their mother-tongue software in all South Africa's 11 official languages.

Translate.org.za, which created the world's first all South African languages keyboard and also released the first word processor and office suite available in Sesotho sa Leboa, isiZulu and Afrikaans, has again partnered with the Department of Communications and the CSIR in a commitment to mother-tongue computer software.

"It is time that South Africans took pride in their mother tongues and worked towards bringing technology into their world as opposed to trying to adapt their world to technology. Mother Tongue Languages Day is an appropriate time to celebrate this – and the Department of Communications, the CSIR and Translate.org.za are doing just that – celebrating our freedom," said Dwayne Bailey, Director of Translate.org.za

In a joint project funded by the Department of Communications and administered by the CSIR, Translate.org.za has delivered OpenOffice.org and the Mozilla Firefox web browser in all 11 official languages. In celebration of Mother-Tongue Language Day, the Department of Communications, CSIR and Translate.org.za are proud to announce an agreement that will see OpenOffice.org, Mozilla Firefox and Mozilla Thunderbird updated and maintained for three years. This will ensure that all South Africans are now empowered to create documents, spreadsheets, email and browse the web in their home languages.

"We are doing it to increase access to technology and increase ICT skills and awareness, which will help to narrow the digital divide. Government is committed to creating a better life and more opportunities for each citizen and this is a tangible way to do that," explained Wernher Friedrich, Director Internet Access and Software Development in the Department of Communications.

All the software in this project is Free and Open Source Software, which means that users may download it from the web at no cost to themselves – a perfect choice for rural communities unable to afford costly alternatives.

Another benefit it that all South Africans can actively participate in improving the software, which is also in-line with the government's policy to support Open Source Software in its procurement process and will assist organisations such as the Department of Science and Technology and the CSIR who are migrating to Open Source Software.

"South Africa needs to stop supporting the overseas IT industry by sending millions of Rand to the so-called developed world in unnecessary licensing fees. It's time!" added Bailey.

Background:

The software translated includes OpenOffice.org, the worlds leading Free and Open Source office suite. It supports the OpenDocument format that is being embraced by many governments and has recently been approved as an ISO standard. OpenDocument will ensure that documents produced now will remain accessible in a year to come – which is essential for archiving and preserving South Africa's unique history. OpenOffice.org itself is a feature rich application that is a drop-in replacement for today's proprietary office suites. It provides a cost effective migration path towards standard document formats, without the usual huge user retraining costs.

The Mozilla suite of products, including Firefox, a leading standards-based web browser and Thunderbird a robust email program, allow users to enjoy the web in their mother tongue.

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